

Troping the Asylum

tables on, as well as "shoot" the messenger, in an early example of "irrational" public outcry against the Asylum, and professional defensiveness. As for Scott, he is not personally guilty, but guilty of inadequately instructing "subordinate officers" to properly bury and secure the corpse against "the custody of an unscrupulous sexton" (380). If anything he is guilty of over-scrupulousness, in returning the parts when he did not really have to, as a "concession to public sensitiveness" (380).

Partly in response to such episodes reforms are implemented, like that of June 20, 1853, vesting the property in the Crown, replacing the Commissioners with a visiting committee, and making the Medical Superintendent independent of them by giving his appointment to the government and giving him the power to hire and fire all officers and servants besides the bursar. After Confederation, such reforms are consolidated in the "British North America Act," where the ninth section gives provincial legislatures control over such institutions as asylums and jails. In curious and incriminating ways, the Lunatic Asylum and its government -- itself so "lunatic" at times -- become the microcosm of a colonial society in its devolution.

(Joseph Workman: *The Doctor's Lance*)

Dr Joseph Workman was born near Lisburn, Ireland, in 1805, came to Canada in 1829, taught school in Montreal, and obtained his medical license from McGill College in 1835. In 1836 he moved to Toronto where he initially ran a hardware store. He resumed medical practice in 1847, taught obstetrics and therapeutics in Dr John Rolph's Toronto School of Medicine, and in 1853 became Superintendent of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum at Toronto. Workman's Asylum had been partially constructed by 1850, and would not be completed until nearly 20 years later. A government institution, the Provincial Lunatic Asylum and its precursor established in 1841, had been characterized by nepotism and mismanagement, and by embarrassing public quarrels between its Commissioners and its politically appointed Superintendents. Workman, a Reformer associated with the influential Dr Rolph in whose school he taught, was one of these. Under his efficient management 'his' Asylum became the